

Exod. 20:12 The Fifth Commandment (part 2) The Object and Result of Honor

Last week we looked specifically at the command in respect to honor and what that means for children and their parents. Really, this is the narrow meaning of this commandment. And we saw that honor is really a matter of the heart. As we honor God we must honor our parents. And, as parents, we must be honorable. This week we will move to a more broad meaning of this commandment as we focus on the object and result of our honor.

1. The object of our honor. I would like to do this by asking, “*Who is your Father and your Mother?*” You might say at this point, “*I know who they are. They are sitting beside me.*” And you would be right (as we saw last week). But, did you know that the meaning of this commandment to honor our parents goes much deeper. I am going to argue that this command also requires us to honor all authority. Listen to question 124 from the Westminster Catechism. It asks, “*Who are meant by father and mother in the fifth commandment?*” Answer: “*By father and mother, in the fifth commandment, are meant, not only natural parents, but all superiors in age and gifts; and especially such as, by God’s ordinance are over us in place of authority, whether in family, church, or commonwealth.*” (short answer: all authority) Now, we don’t get our answer to this question from the Westminster Catechism. We get it from the Bible. But, in this case, I believe this answer is biblical. Here are some reasons I believe this commandment gives the basis to all authority in society.

A. The structure of family metaphors in Scripture. In other words, Scripture uses “father” and “mother” for a wide number of relationships beyond the literal family.

First, God Himself is called Father. In the context of authority, the first commandment is enough to establish all authority. But, in Mal. 1:6, God uses the fifth commandment to establish his authority. He says, “**A son honors his father, and a servant his master. If then I am a father, where is my honor? And if I am a master, where is my fear? says the LORD of hosts to you.**” In the NT Jesus tells us to call God, “*Father*” (Matt. 6:9). And, since God is the ultimate Father, and the basis for all authority, any sin against God (in this broad meaning) is a sin against the fifth commandment.

We see this word for father in many other places in society as well. Here are some instances: It is used in the place of rulers. For example: Joseph is called the Father of Egypt. After Joseph revealed himself to his brothers, he said, “*Don’t be distressed or angry. God sent me here.*” Then he said, “**He has made me a father to Pharaoh, and the Lord of all his house and ruler over all the land of Egypt**” (Gen. 45:8). We see the Father used for military leaders. Naaman, the commander of the army of the King of Syria, is called Father by those under his authority (2 Kings 5:13). Sometimes the prophets are called father. As Elijah was being taken up to God in the whirlwind, Elisha cried out, “**My father. My father**” (2 Kings 2:12). Teachers of wisdom are sometimes called father (Ps. 34:11; Prov. 1:8, 10, 15). In the NT church leaders are called father (1 Cor. 4:15; Gal. 4:19; 1 Tim. 1:2; Titus 1:4)

B. Under God, the family is the fundamental place from which all authority comes. Historically, Adam, the first father, played all the roles that were later divided among different spheres of authority. He acted as a prophet. He acted as a priest. He acted as King. We see the same with

Noah after the flood. We see the same with patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. It was only after Jacob that we start to see these authority roles spread out into specific prophets, priests, and kings. With Israel, we still see that they are called a family. In the NT, the New Covenant community, we are still called a family, with a father, brothers, and sisters. In this way, church government is essentially family government.

Did you know that the family is still the fundamental place of authority in our society (and any society)? For young children, their parents are the authoritative source of teaching, discipline, employment, and religious leadership. Did you know that Paul argues that the ability to rule one's family shows the ability to rule in the church (1 Tim. 3:4-5)? Let me stop for a quick application here. For this reason, the family, not the church is the primary place for religious teaching. What we do as a church only supplements this role. This why we sign a covenant that says, "*We will practice family worship in our homes.*" Our practical position in American Christian culture is to default God-given authority in the home and highlight the church's obligation to teach our kids. Now, don't hear me saying, "*We shouldn't teach our kids in the church.*" In fact, as elders, we believe that we must do better here (but not just for our kids, but for all ages). But, the emphasis is always in the authority of the home. And, our responsibility as elders is to "*equip the body for ministry;*" which still means that we are supplemental, and secondary to the authority of the family in the 5th commandment.

C. All forms of authority deserve honor similar to the honor of parents. Eph. 5:22-24 we see authority structure in the family with wives and husbands and the church. **"Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. ²³ For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior. ²⁴ Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands."** This submission, like the submission of children (from last week) is out of reverence for Christ because v. 21 says we, "*submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.*" In chapter 6:5-9 we see that servants must submit to their masters. In 1 Peter 2:17 we are told: **"Honor everyone. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the emperor."** Psalm 82:6 even uses the word "gods" to designate rulers, suggesting a high level of respect and honor even to evil, or unworthy rulers.

Did you know that the Bible even tells the wives of unbelieving, dishonorable, "*good for nothing*" husbands, as some might say, to be respectful. Listen to these words in 1 Pet. 3:1-5, **"Likewise, wives, be subject to your own husbands, so that even if some do not obey the word, they may be won without a word by the conduct of their wives, ² when they see your respectful and pure conduct. ³ Do not let your adorning be external--the braiding of hair and the putting on of gold jewelry, or the clothing you wear-- ⁴ but let your adorning be the hidden person of the heart with the imperishable beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which in God's sight is very precious. ⁵ For this is how the holy women who hoped in God used to adorn themselves, by submitting to their own husbands. . ."**

Let me a story about an emperor in the First Century. His name was Nero. Some historians say that he purposely started a fire in Rome which lasted for 9 days. They say that he started the fire so that he could rebuild the city the way he wanted. I don't know if this is true or not. But, we also read that he blamed the fire on the Christians in the city. And, after this time, began one of

the most concentrated persecutions of the church in history. It is said that during his reign, he had Christians tortured, pulled apart by dogs or lions, and even used their burning corpses to light his garden parties. Now, in response to such persecutions, Peter writes: **“Be subject for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether it be to the emperor as supreme,¹⁴ or to governors as sent by him to punish those who do evil and to praise those who do good.¹⁵ For this is the will of God, that by doing good you should put to silence the ignorance of foolish people.¹⁶ Live as people who are free, not using your freedom as a cover-up for evil, but living as servants of God.¹⁷ Honor everyone. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the emperor”** (1Pet. 2:13-17). Can you imagine? Really striking are the words in v. 17 which say, *“Honor everyone.”* I believe Peter can say this because he understood the 5th commandment. And, he understood that all authority is given by God.

I don't think I'm too bad with authority. I think generally I respect it. I've always thought I would make a good soldier under authority. Yell at me all day. I will say yes sir and move on. But, nothing tested the concept of authority in my life like the Russian DMV. I have many stories here. I'll share one. One very cold wintry day, I had to drive 5 hours down the main highway to another city. And, the roads are like our main highways, at least this one. You could run up on a snow drift and be stuck for hours, just around the curve. Well, there was one stretch of road that steadily inclined for at least a mile. And, it wasn't that steep. If you have snow tires, there is no problem. But, for the 18 wheelers it is definitely a problem. So, that day, that particular stretch of road was solid ice. And, one 18 wheeler was stuck near the bottom in the right lane. The ONLY way to get around him was to cross the double yellow line and go around, which was against the law. Well, at the top of that hill sat Barney Fife with his binoculars. So, as I went around the truck and headed to the top of the hill, they pulled me over (why me, and not everyone else, I will leave to the providence of God). When I told the policeman there was no other way around the truck, but the other lane, and that every other car was doing the same, he only said, *“You broke the law. What are we going to do about this?”* Knowing he only wanted a bribe, I said in great love, honor, and respect in my heart, *“You're the policeman. You tell me.”* Then, he took my license, which by the way took probably about 20 hours of time, and about \$100 of my money. Oh, I was mad! (this is one of many!) And, God says, *“honor this authority in your heart.”*

Let me ask you this morning, *“Are there authorities in your life that you just can't honor and respect?”* Do you have a boss that you just can't stand? Are the conditions of your work dishonorable because of his/her authority? I would ask the same of wives of unbelieving husbands or of children who think your parents are too demanding. If so, you are sinning. You are breaking the 5th commandment. Remember, that commandment is the basis for all authority in the world? Today, let's be clear. Honor begins with God. It then moves to the home. It then spreads to all authority structures. Children, if you can't honor your parents, how will you honor authority later in life? If you have boss you can't honor, this says a lot about your character. And, if you can't honor your boss, how can you honor a government that may not be so honorable in its relation to Christians? Young high school students. What about your teachers that you just don't like, or think they are too difficult?

So, let me summarize before moving on. Who is my Father and Mother? The implications go deep. This command is the practical basis for all authority on the earth. Let's go to the next part of this command, the result of honoring authorities.

2. The Result of Honor. There is a blessing that flows from obedience to this command. Notice the second part of v. 12: **“That your days may be long in the land that the Lord your God is giving you.”** This is the immediate result of obedience to this command. Paul says in Eph. 6:2 that this command is the first commandment with a promise. What does this mean? I am not sure I understand this promise completely. But, I think I can explain it generally. Think about the original context of this command. Remember, this command is the first command in the second half of the 10 commandments. It begins the 2nd broad meaning of the law which says, “you're your neighbor as yourself.” It is as if God is saying, *“Get this one first and understand this one well. For this is foundational for understanding authority. It provides the basis for all authority in your life. Honor your parents. Honor all men. Respect authority. If you do this, it will go well with you in the land. Your days will be long.”*

So, when we come to Paul in Eph. 6:2-3, he says, **“Honor your father and mother; (which is the first commandment with promise), that it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land,”** I believe Paul, as a NT Christian is applying an OT principle in the context of authority and submission. As Israel obeyed this command, so went society in the land. Today, we don't have a land. In fact, the whole earth is our land. And most versions translate this word as earth in Eph. 6:3. Someone might say, *“I know children who disobeyed their parents for their whole life and lived a long time.”* And, I would have to say the same. This is why, at the least, Paul is teaching a general principle. Disobedience to godly parents is great sin. And, it has great effects on those who disobey. And generally speaking, this leads to shorter life. For example, when a godly father warns his son against the evil of drugs, or chain-smoking, or addiction to alcohol, or sexual sins, or dishonesty, or disrespect to authority, and the son does not listen to this advice, he is following a course that does not as a rule, lead to long life on the earth. And, even if this child lives for a very long time, it certainly won't be well with him. He will have no peace! So, I believe Paul is teaching the promise of obedience still holds. Undisciplined children spell ruin for the nation, the church, and society! So, for the Christian Church, this promise still applies. As father and mother and family goes, so goes the church. This promise is for us!

Now, I will end with some applications.

1. This command to honor your parents is fundamental to all human society. Human society cannot be maintained in its integrity, unless children modestly submit themselves to their parents, and unless those, who are set over others by God's ordinance, are even reverently honored.

2. The health of GBC depends on our practical obedience to this command. How well it goes at GBC in respect to this commandment depends on the home.

3. This basis of this command is honor given to God. How well you submit to authority structures in your life is an indication of your heart as honors, or does not honor God.

4. Respect the authority structures in your life. Give respect to authority. If you do not respect authority placed over you with both motive and actions, you are sinning.
5. Marriage between a man and a woman is normal. The implication for some of the modern and sinful relations between two women or two men who want to adopt children is wrong. And, the effects of these relationships will prove to be detrimental on society in the end.
6. There is an implication for us in the church to emphasize authority in parent/child relationships that will find its way into how we do “youth.” The way we teach children in the church should respect and even prioritize the role of parents in teaching their children.
7. Honor everyone. Even if you disagree with a person, honor and respect them as God’s creation. Respect their opinion.
8. Racism is sin. There is no place for racism as we respect and honor all men under this command.
9. Motivation for respect is found in Christ, who kept this law completely. When we obey authorities, we obey God. Proper attitude to honor God, parents, authorities, etc. will only come with a changed heart that rests in the person and work of Christ.
10. Jesus said, “ALL authority has been given to me.”

Let me finish this morning by reading Psalm 2. “Kiss the Son.”